**HIST 103: Introduction to the Medieval World**

**MWF 8:30-9:20**

**KRAN, Room G16**

**Instructor: Dr. Matthew Schownir** (mschowni@purdue.edu)

Office: UNIV 110, Monday 9:30-10:30, Tuesday 10:00-11:00

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Office: REC 410, Friday 10am-12pm

**Course Description:** This course introduces students to the “Middle Ages,” also known as medieval times (just like the weird roleplaying restaurant). This period is expansive, deep, and mysterious to most 21st century students. When we think medieval, we might think of pop-culture movies (like *Braveheart* or Monty Python), or old structures (European castles and cathedrals), or maybe “medieval” is synonymous with “old,” “superstitious,” or “backwards.”

There are truths to all these conceptualizations of the Middle Ages, but also many falsehoods. In this course, we will explore some of the aspects of the Middle Ages that reverberate through history to our present day. We will find that the successes and failures of medieval civilization directly inform our modern realties, which we in turn use to romanticize the distant past. This course will clear up some misconceptions and give students a richer awareness of Western Civilization’s medieval roots.

**Course Objectives:** The goal of this class is to give students a better understanding of pre-modern history and human civilization across a broad geographic and temporal range. To accomplish this, students are expected to complete weekly reading assignments and learning checks, as well as undertake periodic examinations to demonstrate their comprehension.

**Required Texts:** Barbara H. Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages*, Volume I: From c.300 to c.1150, 4th edition.ISBN: 9781442606142 (paper); 9781442606159 (PDF e-book). Copies are available on Amazon.com and at the University Bookstore.

This textbook will form the bulk of each week’s reading assignments. **As** **learning checks and exams will draw from both lectures AND reading assignments**, you are expected to keep pace with the class by completing the readings on time. You can rent or purchase the textbook, whichever is better for you (I’ll discourage you from stealing it, because, you know, the law), but make sure you have access to the book by Week 2. Other course texts will be provided electronically by the instructor on Blackboard.

**Course Assignments:** Your grade for this class will be calculated from two sources:

* **Learning Checks** – Learning checks are short essay and/or multiple-choice quizzes distributed randomly throughout the semester. There will typically be at least one each week, either before, during or at the end of class, at the discretion of the instructor. Most of them will be unannounced ahead of time.
  + The purpose of these learning checks is to assess your knowledge gleaned from class readings and lectures. In other words, they will keep you accountable to your attendance and regular study. **Note: if you miss a learning check owing to absence, it cannot be made up**. However, each student will have their lowest two (2) learning check grades dropped at the end of the semester, so do not freak out if you missed one because you slept in after an exceptionally rigorous Quidditch practice or a similar typical college experience.
* **Exams** – Three exams will punctuate the semester, dividing our course into thirds. The best way to prepare for these exams is to do the readings and come to class; **all exam questions will be pulled from the textbook and lectures**. Exams are taken in two parts: a multiple-choice section and a short essay section. They are each worth 20% of your total grade.

**Grade Total:** Final grades for the course will be calculated in the following manner:

* Learning Checks: 40%
* Exams: 60%

Because of this calculation, it is ***exceedingly*** important that you come to class. Regularly missing class not only wastes your tuition dollars, but prevents you from completing learning checks and acquiring the knowledge necessary to pass exams. Number grades are assigned on the assumption that 98-100=A+, 93-97=A, 90-92=A-, 88-89=B+, 83-87=B, 80-82, B-, 78-79=C+, 73-77=C, 70-72=C-, 68-69=D+, 63-67=D, 60-62=D-.

**Note-taking and Technology:** Because this is a large lecture-based course with stadium seating, laptops and tablets are prohibited in the classroom. In a class of 100 students, the sound of typing and the inevitable YouTube breaks to watch cat videos create massive distractions, both for your classmates and the instructor. Additionally, studies show that traditional pen-and-paper methods of taking notes are better for studying and retaining information (you can find one such study here[[1]](#footnote-1)). Therefore, please come to each class equipped with a notepad and writing utensil for taking notes during each class session.

The only exception to this rule is in the case of a recognized learning disability or similar condition that necessitates the use of an electronic device in class. If this pertains to you, please present me with documentation from the DRC (Disability Resource Center) and I can make arrangements.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the reproduction of another person’s words or ideas without properly attributing them to that person. In other words, this is passing off someone else’s work as your own. This includes cheating on exams. *Do not do this*. Academic dishonesty is taken very seriously at Purdue. Students found in violation of plagiarism will be immediately referred to the Dean of Students and will likely result in an F grade for the course.

**Other Class Policies:** Any changes to the syllabus will be announced in class or communicated by email, as circumstances necessitate. In the event of a major campus emergency, the course schedule, deadlines, grading percentages and assignments can be subject to change at the instructor’s discretion and communicated appropriately through the class email list. Please show respect to the instructor and your classmates by silencing your phones and showing up to class on time; being late to class is impolite and distracting for everybody. If you absolutely have to leave early or arrive late to class, inform the TA in advance.

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1 (8/21-8/25): The Crisis of the Third Century**

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 1-5

**Week 2 (8/28-9/1): The Roman Collapse and the Birth of Christianity**

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 5-35

**Week 3 (9/4-9/8): Sibling Cultures: Byzantium and Islam**

\*No class on Monday, Sept. 4 (Labor Day)

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 39-57

**Week 4 (9/11-9/15): Monasticism and the Germanic Kingdoms**

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 58-75

**Week 5 (9/18-9/22): Learning About Primary Sources and Review**

\*Exam 1 on Friday, September 22

Readings: Assigned primary sources (see Blackboard)

**Week 6 (9/25-9/29): Restructuring the Eastern Mediterranean**

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 79-96

**Week 7 (10/2-10/6): The Carolingian Empire**

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 96-112

**Week 8 (10/9-10/13): Learning and Living in the High Middle Ages**

\*No class on Monday Oct. 9, (Fall Break)\*

\*No class on Friday, October 13 (instructor at conference)

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 178-192

**Week 9 (10/16-10/20): Fragmentation and Resilience**

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 115-149

**Week 10 (10/23-10/27): The Crusades**

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 170-173

**Week 11 (10/30-11/3): Of Heaven and Earth: Spiritual vs. Temporal Power**

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 164-170

**Week 12 (11/6-11/10): Monarchies of Europe: France, England, the Empire, and Papacy**

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 202-214

**Week 13 (11/13-11/17): The End of the Middle Ages, I: Exploration and “New Worlds”**

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 242-247

**Week 14 (11/20-11/24)**

\*No class this week (Monday cancelled plus Thanksgiving Break on Wednesday, Friday)\*

**Week 15 (11/27-12/1): The End of the Middle Ages, II: Crisis and Consolidations**

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 283-302

**Week 16 (12/4-12/8): The End of the Middle Ages, III: The Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation**

Readings: Rosenwein, pp. 305-313

**Final Exam: TBD**

1. http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0956797614524581 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)